



Development Services

520-432-9300
developmentservices@cochise.az.gov
www.cochise.az.gov
1415 Melody Ln, Bdg F
Bisbee, Arizona 85603

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cochise County Planning and Zoning Commission
FROM: Sharon Larsala, Planner I
FOR: Christine McLachlan, AICP, Development Services Director
SUBJECT: SU26-18 (Gold Gulch Guest Lodging with Wellness and Outdoor Recreation)
DATE: October 14th, 2026

Docket SU26-18 (Gold Gulch Guest Lodging with Wellness and Outdoor Recreation)

A Special Use Authorization request to allow guest lodging with wellness and outdoor recreation on site.

I. DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT PARCEL AND SURROUNDING USES

Applicant: William Coffee
Location: Gold Gulch Road, less than one mile North from Border Road, near Bisbee
APN: 101-45-001
Property Size: 100.38 acres
Zoning: RU-4
Plan Designation: Rural
Growth Area: D
Existing Use: Residential
Proposed Use: Guest Lodging/Outdoor Recreation/Wellness

Surrounding Zoning and Uses

North	State Land	Undeveloped
South	RU-4	Undeveloped
East	RU-4/ State Land	Undeveloped
West	State Land	Undeveloped

II. SITE HISTORY

- 2025 – Septic System, Opt-Out Single-Family Residence, Temporary RV, Cargo Container

III. SPECIAL USE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST

A Special Use Authorization is requested to allow guest lodging as the primary use, with accessory wellness services and outdoor recreation, on a 100.38-acre parcel zoned RU-4. The RU-4 zoning district permits one dwelling per four acres, for a maximum of 25 dwellings. The site contains an existing water well approximately 1,000 feet deep. The proposed resort and recreation development includes a birding sanctuary and morning meditation area; spa and observatory; reception area and gift shop; greenhouse and vegetable gardens; one- and two-bedroom rental units; pedestrian bridge; gym, pool, and sauna; maintenance shop and multiple vehicle parking areas; outdoor zipline course; restaurant and bar; equestrian stables with 15 horse stalls, and an amphitheater for drumming.

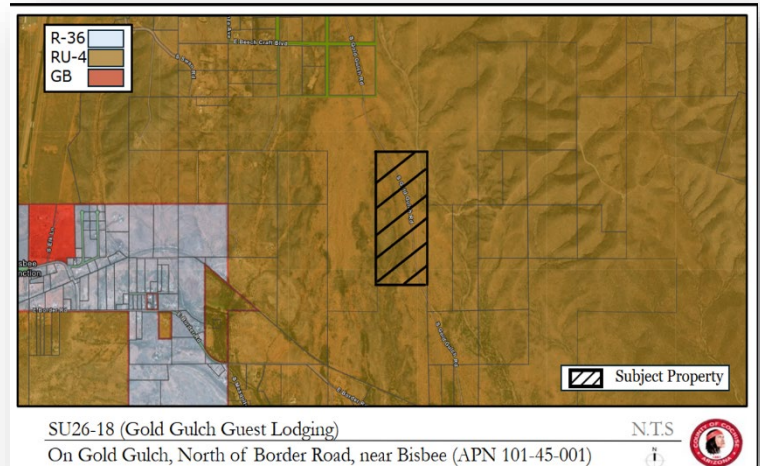
IV. ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS – COMPLIANCE WITH SPECIAL USE FACTORS

Section 2.48.160 of the Zoning Regulations identifies ten (10) factors to evaluate Special Use applications. These factors determine the suitability of a special use request, whether to recommend approval, and to determine if conditions and/or modifications are needed to mitigate potentially negative impacts on surrounding properties. With the information provided, eight (8) factors apply to this special use request with all applicable factors complying with conditions:

1. Compliance with Duly Adopted Plans: Complies

The subject property is designated Rural Residential under the Comprehensive Plan and is within Growth Area D. Approval of the Special Use Authorization would not change the RU-4 zoning and would remain consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The surrounding area is primarily rural residential with low-density development and undeveloped parcels.

2. Compliance with the Zoning District Purpose: Complies



Rural Districts Zoning Purpose:

1. To preserve the character of areas designated as “Rural” in the Cochise County Comprehensive Plan.
2. To encourage those types of non-residential and non-agricultural activities which serve local needs or provide a service and are compatible with rural living.
3. To preserve the agricultural character of those portions of the County capable of resource production.
4. To provide space for people, minimize traffic congestion, and preserve the existing rural environment of unincorporated areas of the County situated outside of existing communities.
5. To provide recreational support services that are compatible with rural living.
6. To protect the quality of the natural environment as it relates to safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of the people in Cochise County; and
7. To allow consideration of some more intense non-residential uses as Special Uses that are inappropriate in more densely populated urban/suburban areas that may under some circumstances be appropriate in rural areas if designed to be sensitive to the general character of rural districts and natural environment and harmonious and in scale with existing development near the proposed site and in conformance with this Section.

Guest Lodging and Recreational Facilities, Indoor and/or Outdoor requires a Special Use Authorization and is typically conditioned to ensure compatibility with the zoning district and surrounding neighborhood.

The Zoning Regulations define Guest Lodging as:

A building or group of buildings furnishing rooms or an area for accommodation for overnight or short-term lodging such as a hotel or motel, resorts, guest ranches, group camps, and campgrounds and may include recreational facilities, restaurants, meeting rooms, or similar

facilities. This definition does not include Recreational Vehicle Parks or Bed and Breakfast land uses.

The Zoning Regulations define a Recreational Facilities, Indoor and/or Outdoor as:

An area designed and equipped for active recreation, sports, or leisure time activities and other customary and similar activities for public or private use, including, but not limited to parks, baseball or softball diamonds, soccer and football fields, tennis courts, and roping and equestrian arenas. This does not include fairgrounds, amusement parks, zoos, outdoor firearms, skeet, archery or trap-shooting ranges, unlighted facilities which are accessory to a permitted principal use, or lighted roping arenas for private use which are allowed as accessory uses to a residential permitted principal use.

The applicant proposes a health and wellness retreat that would provide guest lodging and indoor and outdoor recreational facilities for on-site guests. The proposal includes future buildings and parking while maintaining existing on-site vegetation. The property contains permitted improvements and approvals, including a septic system, single-family residence, cargo container, and temporary RV occupancy during active construction. The temporary RV is currently operating in compliance with its conditions, including 20-foot setbacks from all property lines. The temporary RV permit was issued on October 27, 2025, and expires December 17, 2026; it must be removed or no longer used as living quarters within 30 days after the associated building permit expires.

3. Development Along Major Streets: Not Applicable

This factor encourages reduction in the number of access points along major thoroughfares, arterial streets, and county collector roads by using frontage roads, shared access, no access easements, and other measures. The subject property does not have direct access to a major roadway. Access is provided by Gold Gulch Road, a minor local road that extends north and south through the property. County maintenance ends approximately two miles north of the property, where the road transitions to an unmaintained local road.

4. Traffic Circulation: Complies

This Special Use Authorization factor stipulates:

1. The request is consistent with the preservation of the functions of surrounding streets as defined in the County Comprehensive Plan.
2. The request does not result in the use of any residential street for non-residential traffic.
3. Consideration of future circulation needs in the surrounding area has been considered through right-of-way dedication and off-site improvements if warranted.

According to the Engineering and Natural Resources Division, access from the south would require a right-of-way permit because Border Road is county maintained. One potential access route is Arizona Street, Bisbee Junction, Border Road, Gold Gulch Road, and South Junction Crossing Trail, which is an existing easement serving the subject property.

Alternatively, northern access from Arizona Street via Swan Road, Beechcraft Road, and Gold Gulch Road would require the establishment of multiple easements, including approval from the State Land Department and authorization from affected private property owners.

The request is consistent with preserving the function of surrounding streets as identified in the County Comprehensive Plan. The proposed guest-lodging use, including accessory outdoor recreation, is not expected to direct non-residential traffic onto residential streets. Future circulation needs may be addressed through right-of-way dedication and off-site improvements, if warranted.

5. Adequate Services and Infrastructure: Complies

The site will be served by an existing septic system permitted in 2025. The subject property is within the Arizona Public Service electric service area. Water will be provided by the existing private well, with hauled water available as needed. Any possible comments from the Naco Fire District will be obtained during permitting to address any applicable fire-protection requirements or potential impacts since it is close to the subject property.

6. Significant Site Development Standards: Complies

Applicable development standards in Section 2.15 (RU Districts) and the 2.15 of the Zoning Regulations shall apply to the proposed special use, including setbacks, building height, site coverage, and all other relevant requirements such as County Floodplain Regulations and adopted building codes.

The proposed project would occupy the majority of the 100.38-acre property while maintaining the site's existing conditions and complying with all applicable development standards.

7. Public Input: Complies

Section 2.48.160 of the Zoning Regulations states, "If public concerns have been raised, it is fair to ask if the applicant has made a reasonable effort to address these concerns through the Citizen Review Process. The applicant mailed notice to nearby property owners on August 18, 2026, prior to submitting the Special Use Permit application. The applicant received responses from three nearby property owners, including two in opposition and one in support.

8. Hazardous Materials: Not Applicable

The use or storage of hazardous materials are not proposed.

9. Off-Site Impacts: Complies

This factor is intended to ensure adequate measures have been taken to mitigate off-site impacts such as noise, outdoor lighting, odors, smoke, traffic, and dust:

- Parking: Per section 2.51.040, All parking areas, loading areas, and driveways must have a 2-inch gravel surface (or an approved equivalent) and be properly drained.
- Noise: Staff recommends quiet hours from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. to preserve the area's rural character and minimize potential noise impacts associated with guest lodging and indoor and outdoor recreational activities.



- Lighting and Signs: Outdoor lighting is regulated by Section 2.45.050 of the Zoning Regulations, which sets brightness limits and requires shielded fixtures. In residential and rural districts, non-residential uses are limited to 75,000 shielded lumens and 3,000 unshielded lumens per acre of the developed site. Any proposed signage on site will be subject to section 2.54 of the zoning regulations.
- Landscaping and Floodplain: Per Section 2.51.060, landscaping is not required within Growth Areas C and D. Staff encourages the retention of native vegetation where feasible. A small portion of the eastern upper area of the property is located within a flood hazard area. Development in this area must comply with applicable floodplain requirements during permitting, or proposed improvements may be located outside the flood hazard area to preserve natural drainage patterns.
- Odors: Although significant odor impacts are unlikely, Staff recommends a condition to minimize potential nuisance effects. This is a common condition for more intensive park uses in rural zoning districts.
- Traffic and Dust: The proposed site may be accessed from either the north or south. Southern access would require a right-of-way permit because Border Road is a county-maintained minor collector road without dedicated right-of-way. Dust mitigation measures will be required during permitting to reduce impacts, the applicant plans on preserving the landscape on site.

10. Water Conservation: Complies

County-wide water conservation requirements in Section 2.51.170 of the Zoning Regulations will apply to this project and will be addressed during permitting. The proposal includes the use of a well, runoff-water storage, and the reuse and measures to conserve natural resources, which will be reviewed during permitting. The existing septic system was permitted for only residential use and shall be upgraded as needed to serve any proposed commercial use. The property is within the Douglas AMA and shall comply with all applicable ADWR water-use requirements.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Staff mailed 10 notices to property owners within 1,500 feet, published the legal notice, and posted the property from September 9th to September 25th, 2026. There were two responses in opposition from nearby property owners.

VI. WAIVERS

The applicant has not requested any waivers.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The proposal seeks Special Use Authorization for a Guest Lodging with recreation on a 100.38 acre-acre RU-4 parcel and with adequate conditions to ensure that this special use complies with all applicable requirements and is consistent with the character and intent of the area. Key considerations include proper permitting, access, traffic, parking, and adequate on-site services, with conditions tailored to the intensity of use to ensure consistency with the zoning regulations' intent and character.

Factors in Favor of Approval

1. Complies with all applicable factors.
2. Property has sufficient site area to accommodate guest units, parking, access, septic facilities,

drainage improvements, and required setbacks.

3. Subject property is located away from adjacent residences or property lines, which may help reduce noise, lighting, and privacy impacts.
4. Applicant proposed retaining of the rural appearance of the property through maintaining and preserving the natural vegetation.
5. The project can be conditioned to obtain all required building, wastewater, fire, access, drainage, and health approvals before operation.

Factors Against Approval

1. The proposed commercial guest lodging use may not be compatible with the surrounding rural residential area.
2. The use may increase traffic, parking demand, outdoor activity, noise, lighting, and other impacts on nearby properties.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the factors in favor of approval, Staff recommends approval of Docket SU26-18 to allow Guest Lodging with Outdoor Recreation and Wellness uses, subject to the following conditions:

1. Guest lodging on the 100-acre site shall be limited to a maximum of 25 units, with any increase subject to a special use modification review.
2. All required road access approvals shall be obtained before issuance of a building permit or commencement of operations.
3. A maximum speed limit of 15 miles per hour shall apply to all local or minor roads not maintained by the County that provide access to the site, to minimize impacts on nearby residences and any wildlife.
4. A native vegetation preservation plan shall be demonstrated on the final site plan to be submitted at permitting.
5. Quiet hours shall be observed from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., seven days per week.
6. The developed area shall be maintained in a sanitary condition. Refuse and animal-waste receptacles shall be appropriately sized and designed to avoid attracting wildlife or pests.
7. Within 30 days of approval of the Special Use, the applicant shall provide the County a signed Acceptance of Conditions form and a Waiver of Claims form arising from ARS Section 12-1134. Prior to operation of the Special Use, the applicant shall apply for a building/use permit for the project within 12 months of approval. The building/use permit shall include a site plan in substantial conformance with the approved special use concept plan, the completed Special Use permit questionnaire and application, and appropriate fees. A permit must be issued within 18 months of approval or within time limits specified by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
8. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain any additional permits, or meet any additional Conditions, that may apply to the proposed use pursuant to other federal, state, or local laws or regulations.
9. Any changes to the approved Special Use will be considered a Modification to this Special Use and may require re-hearing before the Planning and Zoning Commission.